

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

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AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 7014

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PIN SIS

SUBJ: ISRAEL ELECTION CAMPAIGN

REF: TEL AVIV 6732

1. SUMMARY. WITH LESS THAN EIGHT WEEKS UNTIL OCTOBER 30 KNESSET ELECTIONS, THERE ARE NO SIGNS OF ANY CONCEIVABLE UPSETS, AND CONTINUED CONTROL OF GOVERNMENT BY LABOR-MAPAM ALIGNMENT AND KNESSET REMAINS ASSURED. ALTHOUGH PROSPECTS FOR A RIGHTWING ALIGNMENT (CALLED LIKUD) HAVE JUST BEEN RESURRECTED, THIS WILL NOT SERIOUSLY ALTER PICTURE. LABOR-MAPAM ALIGNMENT AT WORST MAY LOSE FIVE TO SEVEN SEATS, AND LIKUD MIGHT AT MOST GAIN FIVE TO SIX IN COMPARISON TO PRESENT KNESSET REPRESENTATION, BUT RIGHTWING OPPOSITION CANNOT GAIN SUFFICIENT STRENGTH TO OUST LABOR FROM ITS 25 YEAR MONOPOLY OF POWER. WHETHER LABOR-MAPAM ALIGNMENT WILL RECONSTITUTE PRESENT COALITION WITH NATIONAL RELIGIOUS PARTY AND INDEPENDENT LIBERALS OR WILL SEEK NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT COALITION WITH RIGHTWING GROUPING WILL BE DECIDED ONLY AFTER ELECTION. EMBASSY ESTIMATE AT PRESENT IS FOR RELATIVELY LITTLE CHANGE IN EITHER KNESSET COMPOSITION OR RECONSTITUTION

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OF PRESENT FOUR-PARTY RULING COALITION. END SUMMARY.

2. LABOR-MAPAM ALIGNMENT WILL ACCELERATE (AL EFFORTS TO REACH AGREEMENT ON PLATFORM AND CANDIDATE LIST AND (B) CAMPAIGN ACTIVITY FOR KNESSET ELECTION FOLLOWING HISTADRUT ELECTION SEPTEMBER 11. LABOR PARTY ADOPTION SEPTEMBER 3 OF NEW POLICY ON OCCUPIED TERRITORIES IS NOW BEING DEBATED IN LABOR-MAPAM PLATFORM COMMITTEE, WITH MAPAM EXPECTED TO DISSOCIATE ITSELF FROM SEVERAL KEY CLAUSES. JOINT LABOR-MAPAM LIST OF CANDIDATES MUST BE COMPLETED BY SEPTEMBER 25. WHILE PLATFORM FORMULATION AND LIST COMPILATION MAY EVOKE SOME FRICTION, DOMINANT MOOD IN LABOR CAMP IS CONFIDENCE THAT ALIGNMENT'S CONTINUED CONTROL OF KNESSET AND GOVERNMENT REMAINS GUARANTEED, MAIN CONCERN BEING TO LIMIT POSSIBLE LOSS IN KNESSET REPRESENTATION. CAMPAIGN WILL EMPHASIZE SECURITY AND FOREIGN POLICY ACHIEVEMENTS PLUS PROGRAM OF PROPOSED DOMESTIC REFORMS, AND WILL POINT TO INCESSANT WRANGLING IN OPPOSITION CAMP TO UNDERLINE LACK OF ALTERNATIVE TO LABOR-MAPAM GOVERNMENT.

3. RIGHTWING BLOC LIKUD, WHICH APPEARED ON VERGE OF COLLAPSE LAST WEEKEND, HAS BEEN RESURRECTED IN RECENT DAYS. GAHAL EXECUTIVE SEPTEMBER 5 REVERSED ITSELF AND AGREED TO DEMAND OF STATE LIST AND FREE CENTER PARTIES FOR THREE SECURE PLACES EACH ON JOINT KNESSET LIST AS WELL AS ONE PLACE FOR LAND OF ISRAEL MOVEMENT. FORMAL ACCORD ESTABLISHING LIKUD EXPECTED TO BE SIGNED SEPTEMBER 9. NEGOTIATIONS ARE STILL UNDERWAY FOR FORMULATION COMMON PLATFORM WITH MAIN DISAGREEMENT FOCUSING ON REFORM OF KNESSET ELECTORAL SYSTEM.

4. FORMATIONS OF THIS RIGHTWING ALIGNMENT NO LONGER SEEMS IN QUESTION, ALTHOUGH LONGTERM STABILITY OF FRAGILE AGREEMENT MUST REMAIN OPEN QUESTION. HERUT LEADERSHIP WAS SUBJECT TO STRONG PRESSURE FROM LIBERAL PARTY LEADERSHIP, MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION, GAHAL MAYORS AND PRESS TO ACCEPT COMPROMISE. WHILE PRESS PRAISES UNEXPECTED FLEXIBILITY OF HERUT LEADERSHIP AS GAIN FOR DEMOCRATIC PROCESS, UNDERLYING BITTERNESS AMONG KEY PERSONALITIES WILL LINGER. NEW ALIGNMENT HAS TIME TO REGAIN MOMENTUM LOST IN LAST TEN DAYS BUT WILL HAVE TO WORK HARD TO REFURBISH ITS IMAGE AS CONFIDENTIAL

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GROUP OF PETULANT PRIMA DONNAS.

5. EMBASSY ESTIMATE OF BEST-CASE AND WORST-CASE LIKELY RESULTS OF KNESSET ELECTION FROM US VIEWPOINT AS OF NOW IS SUMMARIZED BELOW. IN BOTH BEST CASE AND WORST CASE EXAMPLES, LABOR-MAPAM ALIGNMENT DOMINANCE IS UNQUESTIONED. IN WORST CASE EXAMPLE, IN WHICH LABOR-MAPAM LOSSES ARE HEAVIEST, POSSIBILITY OF FORMATION NATIONAL UNITY

GOVERNMENT WITH RIGHTWING PARTICIPATION BECOMES MORE POSSIBLE. FOLLOWING SUMMARY ONLY LISTS COALITION PARTIES AND MAJOR OPPOSITION PARTIES BECAUSE MANDATES OBTAINED BY TINY PARTIES ARE UNLIKELY TO AFFECT PROSPECTS FOR FORMATION NEXT GOVERNMENT.

PARTIES	EXISTING	BEST	WORST
	KNESSET	CASE	CASE
LABOR-MAPAM	57	55-57	49-50
LIKUD (GAHAL, FREE CENTER, AND STATE LIST)	31	30-31	35-37
NATIONAL RELIGIOUS	12	11	13
INDEPENDENT LIBERALS	4	5	3

(NOTE: CURRENT 57 MANDATE STRENGTH LABOR-MMAPAM IS BASED ON RECENT RETURN OF ONE STATE LIST MEMBER TO LABOR PARTY).

6. COMMENT. WHILE FORMATION OF LIKUD ASSURES INTERESTING CAMPAIGN, STABILITY OF ISRAELI VOTING BEHAVIOR, UNDERLYING FRICTIONS AMONG RIGHTWING PARTNERS AND LATE-DATE EMERGENCE OF LIKUD COMBINE TO ASSURE CONTINUING LABOR PARTY MONOPOLY. SEGMENTS OF ISRAELI PUBLIC MAY BE EAGER FOR A CHANGE, AN ATMOSPHERE WHICH LIKUD WILL TRY TO EXPLOIT, BUT ANY MAJOR SHIFT IN PARTY-POWER RELATIONSHIPS LIES IN DISTANT FUTURE. ABOUT THE ONLY EFFECT WHICH EMERGENCE OF LIKUD MAY HAVE-- AND IT IS TOO EARLY TO SPECULATE INTELLIGENTLY ABOUT SIGNIFICANCE OF SUCH POSSIBILITY--MIGHT BE TO STRENGTHEN POWER WITHIN NEXT CABINET OF RIGHTWING ELEMENTS OF LABOR PARTY.

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